

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JULY/AUGUST 2012

FOUR DOLLARS



75 Years of WSFR • Hot Croaker Action • Golden Eagle Rebound

JULY





5 "IT'S YOUR NATURE"

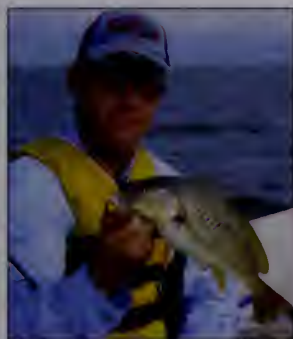
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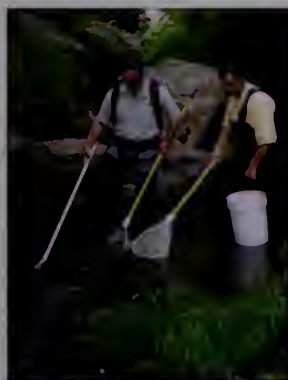
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BOB MCDONNELL
Governor



CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION

By virtue of the authority vested by the Constitution in the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, there is hereby officially recognized:

75th ANNIVERSARY of the WILDLIFE AND SPORT FISH RESTORATION PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, it is important to protect and manage fish and resident wildlife within our Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, hunters, anglers, and trappers in Virginia and other states were among the first conservationists to support the establishment of agencies to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats, and upon realizing that license fees alone were insufficient to restore and sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations supported the development of a system to raise additional funds to support restoration; and

WHEREAS, in 1937 a Virginian, United States Representative A. Willis Robertson, former member of the Senate of Virginia and former Chairman of the Virginia Game Commission, co-sponsored the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, which became known as the Pittman-Robertson Act; and

WHEREAS, the Pittman-Robertson Act led to a user pay-public benefit system so successful that in 1950 a companion Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act was passed; and

WHEREAS, by ensuring dedicated funding derived from sales of hunting, fishing, and boating equipment, the Pittman-Robertson program has contributed to the re-enforcement of sound biological wildlife management and helped to shape the core concepts of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation in Virginia and across the country; and

WHEREAS, the combined contribution of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs (WSFR) to state fish and wildlife agencies has exceeded \$13 billion nationwide and constitutes the American System of Conservation Funding; and

WHEREAS, the WSFR Programs have proved to be the milestone for wildlife management and conservation ethics, while continuing to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, fishing, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the manufacturers of hunting, fishing, and boating equipment have supported the WSFR Programs and continue to exhibit a spirit of cooperation with state fish and wildlife agencies, including the Commonwealth's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Marine Resources Commission; and

WHEREAS, this cooperative partnership has resulted in the most successful model of fish and wildlife management in the world, restoring fish and wildlife populations throughout Virginia and the nation;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert F. McDonnell, do hereby recognize the 75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILDLIFE AND SPORT FISH RESTORATION PROGRAMS in our COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, and I call this observance to the attention of our citizens; and

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Lesser Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this sixteenth day of May, two thousand twelve year and in the two hundred thirty-sixth year of the Commonwealth of Virginia.



Robert F. McDonnell

Janet V. Polarek

MISSION STATEMENT

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth. To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia. To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing. To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing and boating opportunities.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Bob McDonnell, Governor

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Subsidized this publication

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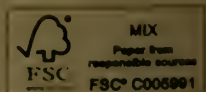
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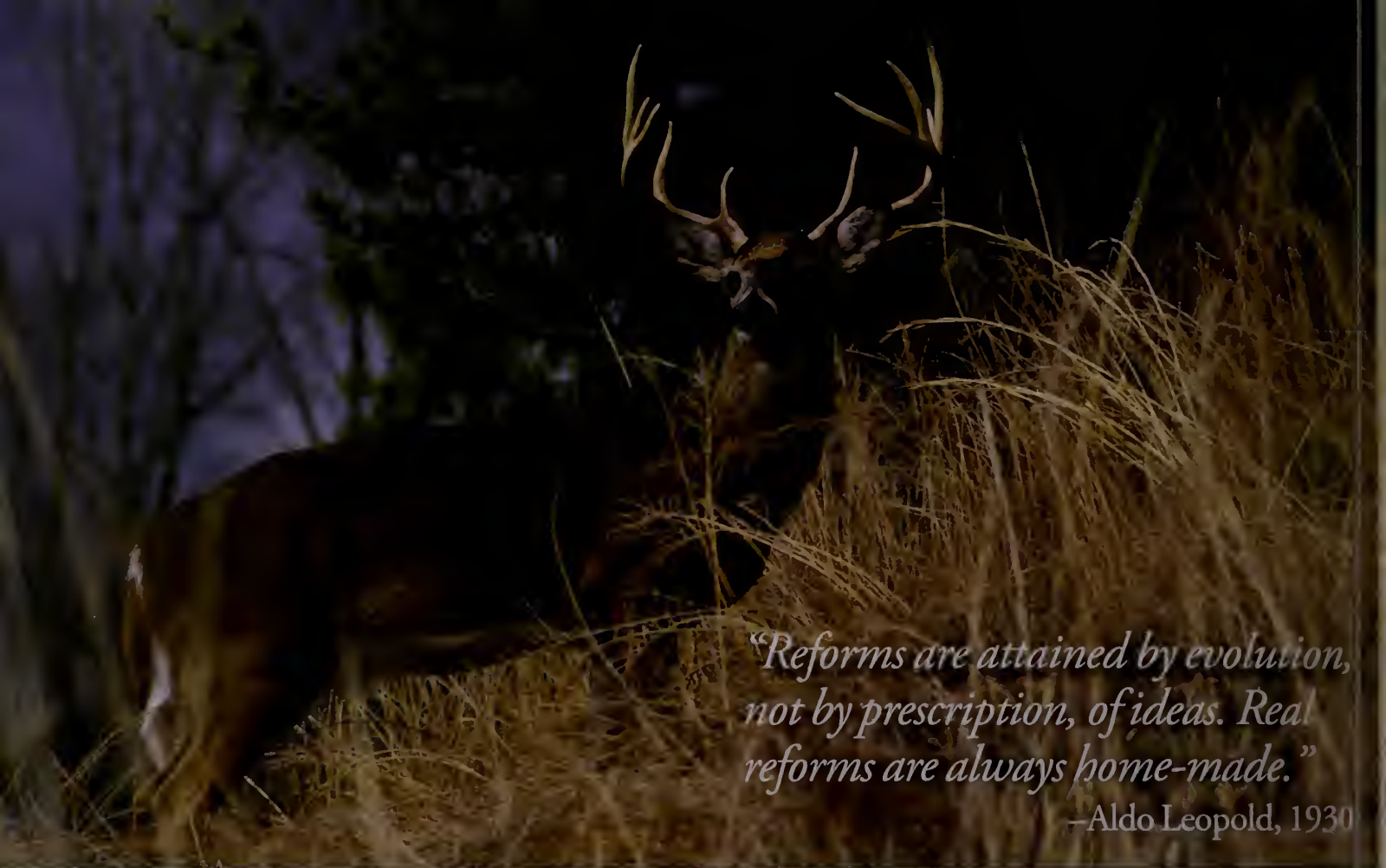
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75 Years
1943-2018

"It's Your Nature"



"Reforms are attained by evolution, not by prescription, of ideas. Real reforms are always home-made."

—Aldo Leopold, 1930

by Virginia Shepherd

*I*t was a close call. So close it makes you catch your breath. By 1862, thirty-two million Americans had hopped aboard a runaway train barreling toward a natural resources disaster—and most of them didn't even know it. While they were busy creating the richest and most powerful nation in the world, they were also laying waste to its very foundation: four million square miles of some of the richest fish and wildlife habitat on Earth.

By the time the first transcontinental railway system broke open the West in 1869, vast herds of 100 million bison and 40 million pronghorn antelope pounding across the plains had vanished. An estimated 60 million beavers had been reduced to 100,000. Thirty to 40 million passenger pigeons, so dense in numbers that reports said it took literally hours for the skies to clear during their migrations, had disappeared. Waterfowl populations had plummeted. Swamps had been drained, prime habitat converted to agricul-

ture, and market hunting continued unabated. Women in America and in Europe were parading the street in hats festooned with the feathers of egrets, herons, and 40 varieties of native birds. They would soon be wearing the entire bodies of birds on their heads. We were plucking America bare.

Nevertheless, most Americans at the time were not parading the streets with placards demanding conservation reform from their legislatures. Rather, they were toasting their good fortune built on the incalculable wealth of their land's rich soil, their free access to the silver and gold veins to be mined just under America's skin, and the seemingly limitless forests thrown over the country's mountains and lowlands like a cloak hiding a treasure of wildlife. America was just too vast, too fabulously abundant a landscape to succumb to the pinprick of mere mortals—or so we believed. We couldn't have been more wrong.

It was a matter of taking too much with too little knowledge of the consequences—and far too little restraint. From New York to California, from North Dakota to Florida,



In 1937 a Virginian, United States Representative A. W. Robertson, former member of the Senate of Virginia and former Chairman of the Virginia Game Commission, co-sponsored the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, which became known as the Pittman-Robertson Act.

we all were to blame. But as history has proved so often, it would be the incremental steps of the few, committed for a lifetime, to wake the conservation consciousness of a slumbering nation. And it would take 75 years—nearly a century—to secure the restoration and future of America's fish and wildlife.

Awakening America to the need for conservation was a painfully slow process, with a monumental learning curve. We simply did not understand the intricate workings of the natural systems we were destroying. We did not understand predator-prey relationships, or habitat or range requirements. We did not understand the inter-relatedness of all living things.

Nevertheless, by the late 1800s and early 1900s, a handful of unorthodox and strong-minded free thinkers emerged with the political will and commitment to save what they recognized as America's greatest treasure. They were, by and large, America's sportsmen. In the first half of the 20th century, near total responsibility for natural resources fell directly on their shoulders. That's because state hunting and fishing license revenue provided the one stable funding source to pro-

tect, restore, and manage fish and wildlife resources. With the creation of state fish and game agencies in the early 20th century, fish and wildlife were given a legislative voice—and a bank account. But it was not enough. Underfunded, understaffed, and prone to political interference, these fledgling wildlife agencies more often than not confronted frustration and failure rather than success. The science of fish and wildlife management simply did not exist, and funds to better understand the principles of fish and wildlife restoration were non-existent. Little money was available to acquire land or pursue informed re-stocking schemes. Law enforcement was a slipshod ineffective affair, often the work of ill-equipped, political appointees.

Nevertheless, like it or not, fish and game agencies were the sole stewards and watchdogs of their state's natural resources, operating in an unrestricted free-for-all, where horrific fish kills from industrial runoff were commonplace and protective environmental legislation, an affront to a free-market economy. To top it off, agencies' precious hunting and fishing license revenues were perpetually threatened by cash-strapped state legislatures for diversion to other projects. As

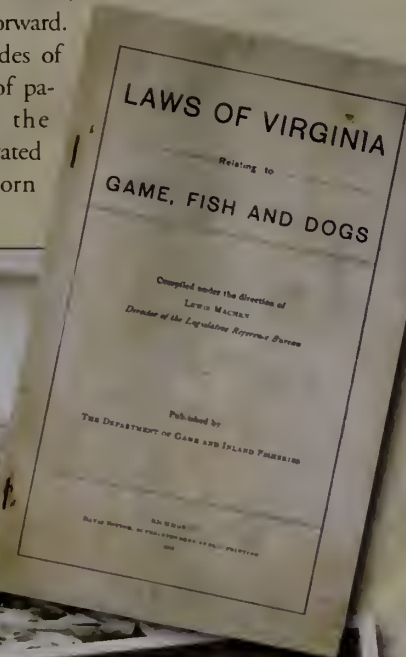
fish and wildlife populations continued their nosedive, there seemed very little that those who cared most deeply about our country's fish and wildlife legacy could do about it. In 1929, a weary A. Willis Robertson, then director of Virginia's state fish and game agency, wrote to his good friend Billy Reed: *"I have been rushed to death all of the summer and owing to the unsettled political conditions, or the inactivity of our wardens, or a growing consciousness of the value of wild life, I have gotten more kicks recently concerning various and sundry matters than at any time during the past three years and it has kept me busy trying to keep the various complainers and criticizers satisfied."*

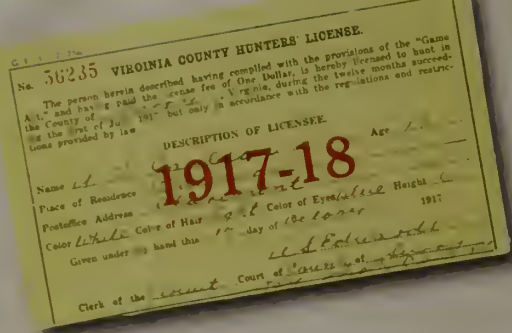
"Anyone who has an idea that a public job is a bed of roses should just lie on it for a few months and he will so find that the thorns are more prominent than the perfume."

But such men did not give up. All across the country, men like Robertson dug in, put their heads down, and pushed forward. It took decades of persistence, of patience, and the certain cultivated wiliness of born



Charged to protect their state's legacy, fish and game agencies were—without exception—underfunded, understaffed, and politically controlled. Most relied on hunting and fishing license fees as their chief source of income to carry out their enormous responsibilities. But these funds were sorely inadequate and perpetually threatened by cash-strapped state legislatures.





sportsmen, because the problem of developing an effective program to restore our failing fish and wildlife populations was not only ecologically complex, it was politically complicated as well. Unlike our European counterparts, the United States had embraced a bold philosophy concerning its wildlife resources. We claimed our wildlife heritage as a public treasure, not a private one. Our unique North American Model of Wildlife Conservation designated the country's wildlife legacy a public responsibility owned by all, not by the few. But... if America's wildlife belonged to the people, and not to the landowners on whose land it might be found, then under whose jurisdiction did fish and wildlife governance fall? Was it a state or federal responsibility? And who then should foot the bill?

It was during the years of 1900 to 1937 that such questions were ironed out and the most effective program of fish and wildlife conservation in the world emerged. When Teddy Roosevelt was ushered into the White House in 1901, federal legislation got a presidential jumpstart. Emergency protective measures were launched, designed to secure great swaths of land as refuges for beleaguered wildlife. By 1913, the federal government had claimed custody of the migratory birds of the nation, establishing waterfowl hunting seasons in every state, and soon established protective international treaties. State fish and game agencies assumed responsibility for virtually all non-migratory fish and wildlife.

Nevertheless, the essential funding mechanisms necessary to fund long-term wildlife restoration programs on both state and federal levels was lacking. There simply wasn't enough money available to implement what people were beginning to realize would be a long-term and monumental task involving close state and federal cooperation and organizational partnerships. It took



Carl Shoemaker was appointed to the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Conservation of Wildlife Resources and was the author of the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. He enlisted the support of Sen. Key Pittman (below) of Nevada to introduce the Wildlife Restoration bill in the Senate and approached Congressman A. Willis Robertson for support in the House of Representatives.



Using P-R funds, adult deer were purchased from several other states and released into areas of suitable habitat. So significant was the success of these restoration efforts that from 1930 to 1957, Virginia's deer harvest rose from 1,299 to a record 22,473. Today, the state boasts an annual harvest of 231,000 and a deer population of one million animals.

more than thirty years of coalition building, endless proposals and defeated legislation, bitter disappointment and deteriorating land use before an unusual opportunity arose and the conditions, miraculously right to grab it.

In 1936, a ten percent federal excise tax on sporting guns and ammunition existed on the books. Congress at the time was in the process of abolishing such excise taxes, but sportsmen groups and other conservationists saw instead an opportunity to propose a diversion rather than a repeal of the tax. The idea was to divert the proceeds from the tax to the states for wildlife restoration projects to be matched on a 3:1 basis with state hunting and fishing license revenue. The ammunition companies supported the proposal, and Carl Shoemaker, former chief of the Oregon Department of Fish and Game, drafted the legislation. Shoemaker enlisted the support of Senator Key Pittman of Nevada to introduce the bill in the Senate. On the House side, Shoemaker approached Congressman A. Willis Robertson, who had moved to Congress from the Virginia Game Department four years earlier. When Shoemaker sat down

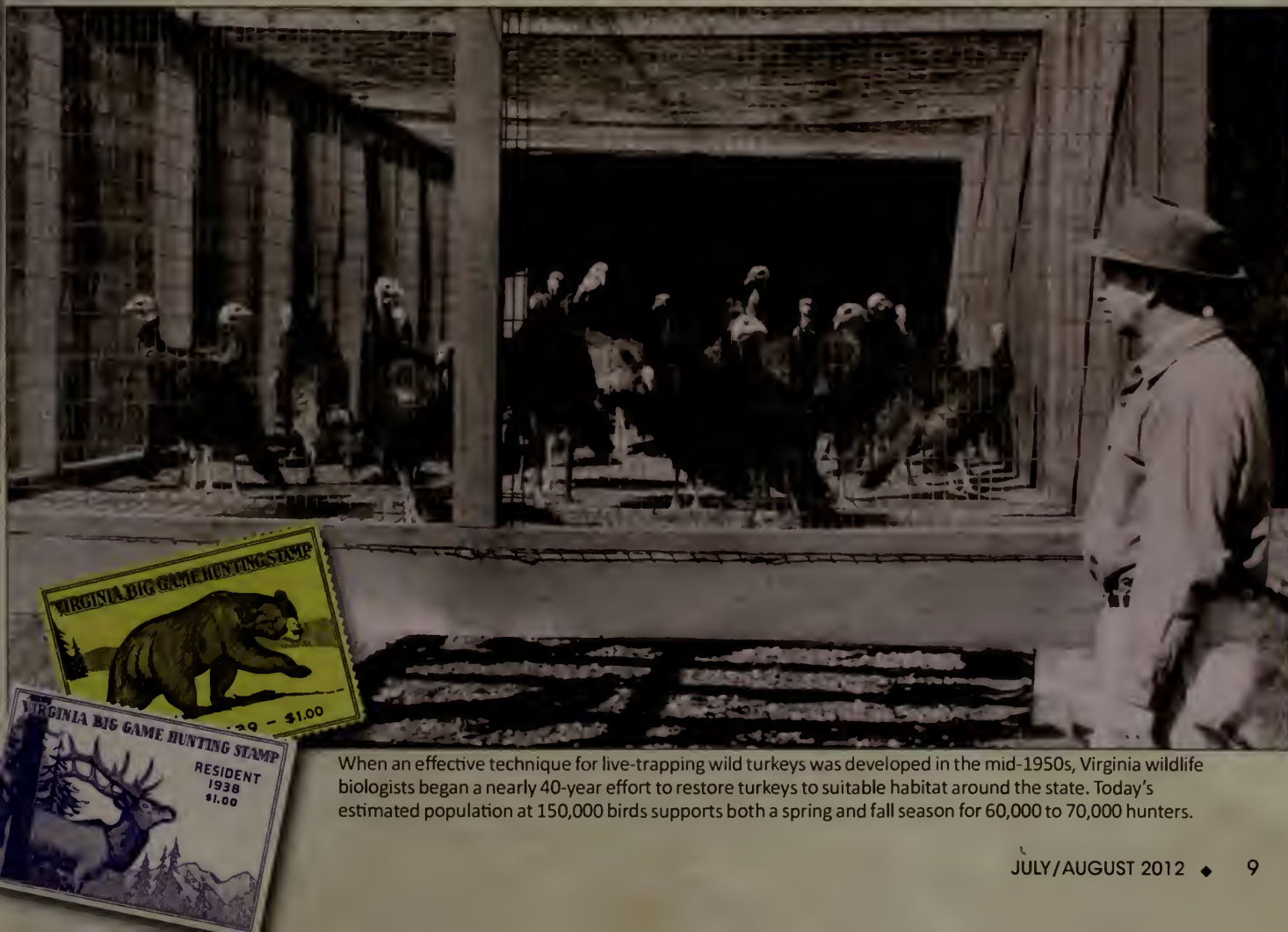
with Robertson and handed him the bill, Robertson penciled in 29 words: "...and which shall include a prohibition against the diversion of license fees paid by hunters for any other purpose than the administration of said State fish and game department." With those words, Robertson secured the future of our fish and wildlife legacy. Robertson's work in Virginia had taught him how capricious state legislatures could be with their income, and he wanted to make sure that the science of fish and wildlife management was taken out of the political arena. If a state wanted federal money to help them restore their wildlife, they had to guarantee their fish and game department's right to use every dime of hunting and fishing license revenue to support it. Period.

The Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act sailed through Congress. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the bill into law on September 2, 1937, turning a deaf ear to protests from his budget office insisting that earmarking funds from excise taxes was not in the country's best interest. Today, on its 75th



Essentially, the only real management tools fish and wildlife agencies had at their disposal were the setting of hunting seasons, bag limits, and methods of hunting.

anniversary, the program has proved without a doubt that it has been in the very best of its country's interest. Its success has been nothing short of astounding.



When an effective technique for live-trapping wild turkeys was developed in the mid-1950s, Virginia wildlife biologists began a nearly 40-year effort to restore turkeys to suitable habitat around the state. Today's estimated population at 150,000 birds supports both a spring and fall season for 60,000 to 70,000 hunters.

From the outset, approved P-R projects included the purchase of land for wildlife restoration purposes; improvement of land for wildlife; and research projects directed at solving wildlife restoration problems. Alabama used P-R funds to re-establish white-tailed deer on nearly 30 million acres of range, and wild turkey on 20 million acres. Alaska used P-R money to learn about the habitat requirements, reproductive biology, and interrelationships between species of Dall sheep, grizzly bear, moose, caribou, and wolves. Connecticut acquired nearly 10,000 acres of land, including key wetlands along Long Island Sound and the Connecticut River. Kansas purchased 57,000 acres of wildlife habitat. Maine's first P-R project live-trapped and banded waterfowl in order to learn more about migration routes, age and sex ratios, and the numbers of local nesting species.



In 1950, following the success of the P-R Program, the Sport Fish Restoration Program was established to secure funding for America's fisheries.



Built in 1931, the Montebello Fish Cultural Station is still in use today, thanks to the continued support and funding contributed through the WSFR Program.

And that was just the beginning. The list goes on and on. The P-R program birthed the science of wildlife management in this country. The program has always focused on "can-do" projects, like making white-tailed deer restoration possible by funding research on how to trap and transport deer to repopulate their historic range. And it has made partnering with sportsmen's groups like the National Wild Turkey Federation and Ducks Unlimited a priority; partnerships which provide matching funds and support for research projects which embody the North American Model's philosophy of "public responsibility" for wildlife. Since 1937, more than \$6.4 billion have been invested in wildlife restoration through the P-R program. It has turned into one of the most successful federal-state-conservationist-sportsmen partnerships in history.

With the passage of the P-R Act in 1937, sportsmen and other conservationists had built up a head of steam they were bound and determined to keep using. A companion bill to establish a stable and secure mechanism to fund the restoration of America's fisheries was the next goal. In California, Congressman Frank H. Buck introduced legislation in 1939 designed along the lines of the P-R Act to im-



Whether it's purchasing critical habitat (above) or restoring bald eagles (right), hunters, shooters, anglers, boaters, and manufacturers of outdoor sporting equipment have contributed over \$12 billion in the past 75 years to the most successful conservation movement in the world.

pose a 10 percent manufacturers' excise tax on fishing equipment and lures used for recreational fishing. Unfortunately, the bill died in committee. Undaunted, Congressman Buck introduced a similar bill two years later, but World War II halted its progress. Six years later in 1947, Congressman John Dingell, Sr. of Michigan revived the fisheries restoration bill, but it failed again to pass. Senator Edwin Johnson of Colorado introduced an identical bill the following year. Still, it would not be until 1950 that the United States finally had a Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act that would be the genesis of a reliable funding source that has generated more than \$5.4 billion for fisheries research, habitat restoration, recreational boating access, construction of fish hatcheries, and aquatic education.

Through excise taxes and license revenues, sportsmen have contributed more than \$12 billion to conservation through the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs (WSFR), and annually provide more than 80 percent of the funding for most state fish and wildlife agencies.

For 75 years, WSFR has been the engine driving the restoration and management of our fish and wildlife resources. It has been

justly called the most successful conservation management program in the world. America's hunters, shooters, anglers, and boaters should be proud that they have held the program on their shoulders for 75 years. But WSFR is not the exclusive club of the sporting community. As Aldo Leopold, one of our country's greatest conservationists and crafters of the P-R Act reminds us: "One cannot divorce esthetics from utility, quality from quantity, present from future, either in deciding what is done to or for soil, or in educating the persons delegated to do it. All land-uses and land-users are interdependent, and the forces which connect them follow channels still largely unknown."

So, buy a hunting license even if you don't hunt. Buy a fishing license not because you fish, but as an affirmation of what is worth saving in this great country of ours. WSFR is an American legacy, fought

for by sportsmen, supported by sportsmen, but open to all.

And if you are hunter, shooter, angler, or boater? Well, A. Willis Robertson would pipe up just about now that you ought to stop everything and march yourself right out into the great outdoors. In 1932, he wrote "...I feel that the high tension at which the average man has been living is wrecking entirely too many nervous systems. Hunting and fishing is the best nerve tonic I know, and I believe that a greater opportunity for the average citizen to engage in this type of outdoor recreation would greatly promote both the health and happiness of our people."

Join us and you will see why "it's your nature" to help preserve our nation's wildlife resources. ✱

Former editor Virginia Shepherd has been a freelance writer for the past 15 years.



Cycle of Success

Better fishing, boating, hunting, and wildlife-associated recreation.

State agencies implement programs and projects.



States receive grants.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service allocates funds to state fish and wildlife agencies.

Anglers, hunters, and boaters purchase fishing/hunting equipment & watercraft fuels.

Manufacturers pay excise tax on that equipment and boaters pay fuel taxes.



Deer Management 101





You can build a better deer herd.

by David Hart

Franks Myers and Stephen Wright have killed plenty of deer in Brunswick County over the years. But it wasn't until the two brothers-in-law started hunting other states did they realize there was something missing from their backyard: quality deer.

"We have a lot of deer, but we just never saw many big ones. Then we started traveling to hunt places like Texas and Missouri. They produce some pretty big deer because the landowners manage them," recalls Myers, a 52-year-old logger. "We decided we wanted to try some new things on the land we hunt to see if we could have some better bucks."

So in 2005 they signed up for DGIF's Deer Management Assistance Program. They devised a basic management plan, contacted the Department, and spent part of a day touring their property with a biologist who suggested ways to grow a better, healthier deer herd.

It not only worked, it's been a dramatic success. They've seen a tremendous improvement in the quality of the bucks, the age structure is better than it was when they first started hunting the land ten years ago, and the average weight of the deer they harvest has increased, as well.

It hasn't been an easy process, though. Myers and Wright, along with the rest of the group that hunts the land, record everything from the weight and age of each deer they kill to the specific location and harvest date of each animal. Nor has it been cheap. They plant about 100 acres of food plots and maintain and monitor 15 remote cameras scat-

tered across 2,100 acres. They'll also climb into their blinds throughout the summer just to get an idea of exactly how many deer are using their land.

"It's almost a full-time job," says Wright, a 42-year-old logger from Gasburg.

Managing *your* local deer herd doesn't have to be so complicated. And it doesn't have to empty your bank account. It can be as complex and expensive or as simple and cheap as you want it to be. However, what you put into it will equal what you get out of it.

Trigger Management

Some hunters, like 76-year-old Keysville resident Terry Miller, don't get too wrapped up in the details of deer management. He relies on what some biologists call "trigger management." Miller simply passes up smaller bucks so they have a chance to grow bigger. A lifelong hunter, he has taken countless deer, including



©David Hart



©David Hart

Good habitat management and forest thinning create new food sources and cover for deer and other wildlife.



©David Hart

Creating open areas promotes new understory growth as well as space in which both small and large game can browse.

lots and lots of smaller bucks, so he's not interested in pulling the trigger on a basket-racked eight pointer anymore. Instead, he holds out for an older buck with a bigger set of antlers. Some years he sees one, some years he doesn't, but that's not to say he doesn't harvest a few deer each season.

"I shoot plenty of does for meat," says Miller.

Trigger management is perhaps the most effective, or at least the most tangible, ingredient in a successful management plan, says Quality Deer Management Association outreach and education director Kip Adams, also a certified wildlife biologist. The QDMA lists four basic ingredients in the recipe for successful management: hunter management, herd management, habitat management, and herd monitoring. Adams says of those four, holding off on smaller bucks is one of the best ways to improve the overall age structure.

"Trigger management can also mean harvesting more does, which is an important part of the quality deer management equation, especially if you have more deer than the habitat can support," he adds. "For most people, though, voluntary restraint in the form of passing up small bucks will have noticeable results in the next couple of years."

Myers agrees. He and the others who hunt their 2,100 acres are so serious about herd management they shot just two antlered bucks last season and about a dozen does.

"We could kill a lot more deer, but we all like seeing deer," says Myers. "We have an unwritten rule that if you shoot a buck, you mount it. It works. Most of the bucks we kill are at least 140 inches (Boone & Crockett score) and we shoot a few over 160 inches every once in a while. That's pretty darn good for southern Virginia."

Habitat Matters

It helps that Myers and the others in the club have lots of land, but equally important are the habitat improvements they've undertaken as part of their management plan. A dozen does in an entire season may not seem like enough to keep the population down, but the two hunters have enough quality habitat to support lots of deer. Thanks in part to their background as loggers, Myers and Wright understand the benefits of cutting trees, which produces new food sources that don't

What is DMAP?

Want to start a management plan? Consider signing up for the Department's Deer Management Assistance Program, or DMAP, an open-ended, goal-oriented deer management program that involves hunters, landowners, and DGIF biologists. The goals can vary, but most hunters typically want to improve the overall age structure of the bucks, improve the health of antlerless deer, and create better habitat for all types of wildlife. A typical DMAP prescription usually includes harvesting fewer bucks and more does, and it can involve some extensive habitat improvements. Landowners, on the other hand, can use DMAP to reduce overall deer numbers to protect crops or native habitat.

Interested individuals or groups must submit an application with a written management objective along with a map of the property. Once accepted, hunters must collect such data as date of kill, weight of harvested animals, and a jawbone so biologists can age individual deer. The data is analyzed by a Department biologist who suggests specific actions that can include additional antlerless harvest and a reduced buck harvest.

About 860 clubs or individuals are enrolled, and they manage 1.5 million acres throughout Virginia.

* * *

Interested? Visit www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/deer/dmap.asp or the Quality Deer Management Association at www.qdma.org.



©David Hart

The use of remote or trail cameras can be important to any management plan. You have to know what's out there in order to manage it.

exist in a mature forest. The dense growth that springs up in clear-cuts also creates bedding and escape cover, another vital part of their management plan.

"We have places we never hunt or never even walk through at all, even in the summer. That makes the deer feel more comfortable. We actually see more deer later in the season because they aren't getting pushed around like they do on the surrounding land," notes Myers.

Along with refuges and thick cover, Myers and Wright also plant food plots, lots

of them. They started with a handful of smaller plots, but the deer gobbled them up so fast there was little left when the season started. They now have about 100 acres in corn, beans and wheat, three high-quality crops that last throughout the season. Because the deer have so much food—both planted and natural—their land can support more deer. Adams warns, however, that food plots alone won't boost deer numbers or antler size, which is primarily influenced by age.

"You have to look at all of the habitat. Just because you have a thousand acres doesn't



©Bill Lea



©David Hart

Food plots can help in your management plan when combined with other efforts. Include kids in your plan, too, even if it means harvesting a deer that doesn't meet your standards.

mean you can see much of an improvement in age structure, population, and body weight if you put in a few food plots," he says. "Timber management is an excellent way to improve the habitat because mature forests usually don't offer a lot of food for whitetails. Native vegetation also tends to survive extreme conditions like drought better than food plots."

Bigger Is Better

The best habitat management plan involves both food plots and natural habitat enhance-



©David Hart

ment, something Myers and Wright have the ability to do because they hunt over 2,000 acres. Miller hunts about 200 acres. He does plant food plots, but he understands they don't guarantee bigger or more deer. Although there is no magic acreage, DGIF deer project leader Matt Knox says the larger the tract of land, the more you can do with it and the better the results will be.

"The problem with a smaller tract is that your neighbors might shoot the deer you are trying to protect," he says. "It's impossible to keep deer on 50 acres or even 200 acres."

That's not to say you can't have some success on a small parcel, particularly if your land is bordered by a refuge like a park or a farm that isn't hunted. If that's not the case, you can form some sort of cooperative agreement with surrounding landowners. It can take some effort to get others on board, but as more hunters understand the benefits of a management plan, getting them to agree may be as simple as asking.

"A lot of hunters have shot enough small bucks over the years that they are now interested in seeing bigger deer," says Adams. "Interest in quality deer management has exploded in the past ten years or so."

Results May Vary

Don't expect to see a giant buck every time you climb into a tree stand, even if you undertake some serious habitat improvement efforts. The success of Myers and Wright is proof that an active and thorough deer management plan can have noticeable results, but they control over 2,100 acres, or more than three square miles. Considering the average statewide buck harvest is just three per square mile, Knox says hunters should not expect a miracle, no matter how much work they put into management, especially if they only have a few hundred acres or less.

"You aren't going to see a bunch of giant bucks running around even if you haven't shot a little buck in a few years," says Knox. "Anything you do to improve the land or protect younger age-class deer will help, but you need to be realistic."

You also need to keep it in perspective. Adams says some hunters get so wrapped up in whitetail management they refuse to let even young hunters shoot a buck if it doesn't meet a certain criteria. Not Wright. He gets as much thrill from seeing the smile on the face of a child who just harvested a spike as he does from shooting a giant buck himself.

"Taking a small buck or two isn't going to make a big difference in the long run," says Wright. "However, allowing children the freedom to take a small buck will make a big difference in the future of hunting." ❧

David Hart is a full-time freelance writer and photographer from Rice. He is a regular contributor to numerous national hunting and fishing magazines.



Hot Fishing Action for Hot Weather

Croaker remain a staple for good summertime fishing, but you may need to adapt your routine.

by Mark Fike

All saltwater anglers can tell the same story. The summer sun is bearing down, the temperature and humidity has your shirt soaked through, fried bloodworm pieces litter the bait tray or gunnels, and the mood on your boat has changed for the worse. The croaker bite was once a sure thing, but has now morphed into a contest to see who can waterlog the most bait. The solution to turning those sweaty frowns upside down is as simple as starting up the boat or pulling the anchor.

Although the croaker bite is widely known as the most reliable bite in the bay, summer temperatures and bright sunshine can easily put a damper on the action if anglers are not willing to move around.

Where to Look for Hardheads

Atlantic croaker, also known as hardheads, inhabit all of Virginia's briny waters to include lower tidal rivers, the Chesapeake Bay proper, and the Atlantic Ocean. Croakers are bottom dwellers that delight anglers with their surly fight on light tackle. These scrappy fish generally average a pound or two and commonly measure 12 to 16 inches long. Some fish will stretch over the 18-inch mark and nudge the scales over three pounds. If you are fortunate

and hook one that size, you won't forget it. They fight like a fish three times their weight. Try that on light tackle!

Croaker prefer structure and they tend to gravitate to a hard bottom. Oyster reefs, riprap, old asphalt piles, and reefs are excellent places to begin your search. This is where a chart of the bay or ocean is key to knowing where to start. Take time to look through the nautical charts of the area where you usually launch your boat and find marked underwater structure. If you have a GPS or sonar unit, use it to locate those marked areas.

Some anglers immediately go deep during the hottest part of the summer, but croaker are not always found in deeper water. Although thirty feet or more of salty depths can be enticing to a fish seeking refuge from the heat and sunlight, sometimes croaker are found in very shallow water where structure is present. An open mind is an important tool in your pursuit. A sonar unit can be used to locate ledges and drop-offs. Consider not only the main channel in the rivers and the bay, but also back channels and secondary channels coming out of tributary creeks. Looking for humps or holes in shallow water is also a wise move.

In fact, shallow water that is close to deep water in conjunction with structure

often proves to be the sweet spot during a midday run for fish. Motor uptide or upwind of the structure, depending on which is stronger; then drop the bait, allowing it to drift into the zone where the fish are located. The wind, tide, and current are all variables to strongly consider when positioning your boat to put your lines out.

Drift Fishing

A stiff tide or strong wind will make for a fast drift. Therefore, a heavier sinker and more lead time uptide or upwind of the structure is needed to get the bait in the proper strike zone. In fact, during a ripping tide or heavy wind it may be more efficient to throw an anchor overboard to slow the drift. Leave just enough rope out to let the anchor drag the bottom but not enough to hold fast. If there are fish in the area and the water is moving fast, they will often hunker down behind structure anyway. With this in mind, I often position my boat even farther uptide or upwind than the main structure so that when I drop my line overboard it drifts right into the perfect zone where the fish are holding out of the current.





Croaker rigs are simple to make or tie, using a three-way swivel, a 12-inch piece of 4–8 pound test line, and appropriate size sinker. Tie on an 18-inch piece of 14–20 pound test list with a 1 or 1/0 size hook. You can also use snelled hooks with flashers on them. Then simply tie this to the end of your line. A piece of bucktail dresses up your hook and adds attraction to the bait.

While a bottom rig will work, it has been my experience that a hand-tied rig will often perform better. A flounder rig will work wonders compared to a bottom rig while drifting. To make your own rig, tie a number 1 or 1/0 hook to an 18-inch piece of 14- to 20-pound test leader. Attach this to a three-way swivel. Next, use a 12-inch piece of 4- to 8-pound test weight line to attach your sinker to the swivel. Tie the rig to the end of your line. Sometimes I will add flashers or spinners or even bucktail, creating more attention with the additional hardware on my line.

Bait choice is always a personal preference. The common-sense rule of thumb is to give the fish what they want. Some days the fish prefer something different, such as fresh clams. Other days Fishbites are the way to go, and yet on other days bait shrimp is the only thing you can really entice them with. Over the past few years I have done very well with shrimp as my bait. Bloodworms are a sure thing if there are croakers around, but keeping these expensive worms fresh makes them less attractive unless the fish are really being

THINGS TO REMEMBER

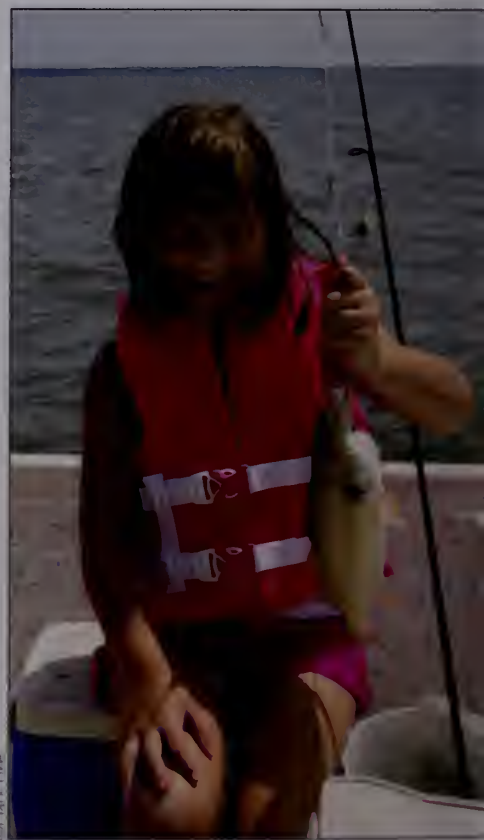
- ◆ If you fish at night, be sure to have the proper lights on your boat and use them.
- ◆ Wear a PFD at all times and let someone know where you plan to fish. A cell phone and/or a marine radio should be handy too.
- ◆ Keep an eye on the weather conditions. Storms can rapidly approach, altering conditions on the water in a hurry.
- ◆ Take plenty of sports drinks and water, and drink them.
- ◆ Wear sunscreen, a long-sleeved light fishing shirt, and a hat. Skin cancer occurrence is on the rise.
- ◆ Polarized sunglasses will protect your eyes and give you an edge when navigating and fishing the shallows.

Conversely, a slack tide, light breeze, or combination of both may dictate a very small amount of weight to get the bait to the bottom and no use of the anchor. During these conditions, a drift is almost always better than anchoring. In fact, with the right wind direction, one can cover some prime territory with little to no maneuvering of the boat.

Gearing Up and Baiting Up

Drifting for croaker requires no more sophisticated gear than you would use for any other method of fishing for these chunky panfish. However, while drifting there is always a greater possibility of getting hung up. For this reason, a reel spooled with a higher test line such as 20-pound test, the use of a drop line of lighter test weight such as 6-pound test (with your sinker on it so the whole rig is not lost), and possibly a heavier rod to work out snags would be a good idea.

Baitcasting reels and rods seem to be a favorite among anglers using this tactic because of the added strength and raw reeling power for pulling fish out of structure or yanking a hook free of an obstruction. However, don't overlook a medium action spinning set-up either. The fight is pure delight.



Croaker, or hardheads as they are commonly known, are a delight for anglers of any age and easily caught throughout the summer.

picky. Try shrimp and bloodworm flavored Fishbites first. Fresh cutbait or squid tipped with a minnow picks up more than their share of fish too.

Low Light or Night Action

Not all anglers are cut out for sitting in a boat during the midday heat. The good news is that low light periods, overcast days, and night action are even better during the summer than are midday options. The water is often free of other anglers and many times the wind calms down, eliminating one of the variables of positioning your bait.

Jetties or riprap banks are very good spots to find croaker on overcast days or as the sun fades. The structure draws baitfish and crabs which, in turn, brings in the croaker. Shoals or reefs are also good spots to fish. One last location to consider is small estuaries or inlets holding grass beds or shoals.

At night the fish go shallow in search of food. Anglers will find it much easier to

anchor at night and fish in the shallows near land and it is safer, too. At night anglers can often forego large weights if the conditions are calm. Use small weights and give your baits a tug every minute or so, or even drag them back toward you with a few cranks of the reel to stir up the bottom. Keep a tight grip on your reel and rod because the croaker will hit suddenly and quite hard. Unattended rods end up overboard!

Just because the summer sun is bearing down hard enough to make the devil sigh does not mean that the croaker bite is over. The location and tactics just changed a bit. If you will change with the conditions, your rods will bend more, bait will actually get used up, and that familiar croaking sound coming from the cooler or fish box will cause smiles to spread around the boat. Consider some changes to your croaker game plan to put more of these tasty game fish on ice this summer! 🎣

Mark Fike is a freelance writer and photographer from King George.



Sanders shows off a croaker caught by dragging a bottom rig in a small, secondary channel.



Look for structure such as pilings, riprap, or jetties to pull in your share of croaker.

Wild Rebound: **A Tale of Golden**



Eagles

by Todd Katzner
and Jeff Cooper

Only a few of Earth's creatures are truly evocative of wilderness. In the East, we have driven off or assimilated the wildest of them. Wolves and cougars were exterminated over a century ago. Bald eagles, on the other hand, were once rare but now are found in abundance throughout eastern Virginia and the Chesapeake region. Even peregrine falcons have abandoned their cliff-side haunts and now breed best in urban environments, on the ledges of high buildings.

However, one wild and surreal creature still roams our woods. This spectacular animal is so secretive that most easterners don't even know it exists in remote areas of the Appalachian Mountains. It is truly indicative of wild places, and its numbers are on the upswing.

What is it? The golden eagle.

In the rest of the world, golden eagles are known to be a bird of high, jagged mountains and open, windswept country. These majestic eagles are typically found near their prey—medium-sized birds and mammals such as the chucker partridge, red grouse, marmot, and jackrabbit. Here in the U.S., the golden eagle's closest relative is its distant second cousin and our national bird, the bald eagle. In Europe, Asia, and Africa, though, there are many closer relatives—first cousins, including central Asia's imperial and steppe eagles, Africa's tawny and black eagles, and Europe's greater and lesser spotted eagles. Globally, this group of raptors is known as the "booted eagles" because of their heavily feathered legs. All are brown with tawny

A golden eagle ascends after release. The telemetry units used in this research were designed by wildlife biologist Michael Lanzone. The unit collects data on its location every 30 seconds, allowing for detailed tracking of movement. Photo courtesy of Randy Flament. Left, Dave Kramar from Virginia Tech releases a golden eagle over the Blue Ridge Mountains.

markings, often with white on the wings and light yellow-gold feathers on the back of the head.

Golden eagles in eastern North America have a long and complex relationship with people. Like so many other species, they were once far more common than they are today. Years ago these birds bred in the northern reaches of the Appalachians—in New York and throughout New England, as far south as Massachusetts. As recently as 1997, golden eagles were defending breeding territories in remote parts of northern Maine. However, since that time there has been no record of golden eagles nesting in eastern North America. Instead, these regal birds now breed only in Canada, but they winter in large numbers in the Appalachian range.

What caused the decline in eastern golden eagle numbers? Two factors primarily. The first is a combination of persecution by people and habitat change. There was a time when birds of prey—not just eagles, but hawks, falcons, and vultures too—were shot on sight. When combined with the loss of habitat to farming and urbanization from expanding human populations, these activities took their toll. The second factor was chemical toxins, primarily DDT, which cause bird eggshells to be catastrophically thin. Golden eagles ingest DDT when their prey includes

piscivorous birds—fish-eating cormorants and herons—that accumulate the pesticide in their diet. DDT caused reproductive failure over the ten years that golden eagles last tried unsuccessfully to breed in the eastern U.S.

One of the most interesting parts to the tale of Eastern golden eagles is their strange history in the southern Appalachians. There is no reliable evidence that golden eagles have, in recent times, bred south of upstate New York. Nevertheless, groups of well-intentioned but misguided people have tried to "reintroduce" golden eagles to the southern Appalachians: in Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and even Pennsylvania. All told, over 200 birds from western North America were released in these states.

Because golden eagles didn't breed in the southern Appalachians, these efforts introduced a non-native breeding species to a novel environment. Introduction of exotic species or new bloodlines is generally considered bad conservation practice. Think of starlings, house sparrows (featured in the June issue), pigeons, and nutria, all exotic species released into this country with the best of intentions but worst of outcomes. Additionally, and perhaps even more importantly, there already are a couple of thousand golden eagles in eastern North America. These birds may have once been genetically distinct, with their own



Over the past three springs, the research team has followed ~50 golden eagles, collecting many tens of thousands of data points to pinpoint flight paths and habitats. From these, they have created fine-grained GIS maps and models of migration behavior between Quebec, where the birds summer, and Virginia and West Virginia, where the birds winter. Map courtesy of Trish Miller, WVU/PSU.

unique adaptations to their eastern habitats. That genetic distinctness is likely now gone, as the addition of foreign genes in such large numbers would have homogenized eastern and western populations.

In spite of their convoluted history, today's Eastern golden eagle populations appear to be undergoing a resurgence. From about 1990 to 2005, the numbers of birds observed at autumn migration hawk counts have increased steadily. Likewise, the number of birds seen during winter also is on the rise, and this population is receiving increased attention as recognition grows of its special status and unique importance to the Appalachians.

In Virginia, our team composed of academic researchers from West Virginia University and biologists from the Department of

Game and Inland Fisheries is tracking movements of golden eagles in winter and studying their migration to Canada. Each year, we leave our warm homes and head uphill, into the peaks of the rolling Appalachians. Once there, we collect roadkill deer and place them next to a motion-sensitive camera in small clearings on mountaintops. Golden eagles come visit these bait sites, to feed on the food we provide. When they and their scavenging brethren feed, the camera photographs them, giving us a record of local wildlife. Once we confirm the presence of the eagles, we secretly install traps and capture the birds when they return to the bait. After capture, we outfit the eagles with telemetry backpacks and let them go, back to their business. These small units don't impact the birds, but they do constantly collect GPS readings and send that data back to us over a cell phone system, letting us track the eagles' movements year-round.

What are we learning from this research in Virginia's high country? Most importantly, we are generating reams of natural history data on the travels of these birds—where and how they move and how much space they use. Previously, only a few individual golden eagles had been tracked in the East. To date, our team has tracked over 50 Eastern golden eagles, most of them trapped in Virginia. Now we know where these remarkable birds go in the summer (usually, to northern Quebec) and how they get there (most often, migrating along or near to the Appalachian ridges that

stretch from Virginia to upstate New York). We know how much these birds move in winter (they cover huge areas, hundreds of square miles) and how high they fly when on winter ranges (relatively low, only 100–200 feet above the ground) and on migration (low when following ridges, higher over gentler terrain). Finally, we are beginning to understand how many of these birds there actually are (probably between 1,500 and 5,000) and how their lives progress, from hatchling to adult.

We are also learning things about the threats golden eagles face in the post-DDT era. Still today, there are those who shoot eagles, and other dangers persist—such as lead exposure and inadvertent capture in traps.

Looking to the future, our eagle tracking informs the promise of alternative energy sources. Our research is geared toward understanding how golden eagles move, so that wind energy—so critical to an energy-independent future for the U.S.—can be developed in ways that don't negatively impact soaring birds of prey.

What does the recovery of golden eagles mean for conservation of natural resources in Virginia? First, it means that management of habitats, pesticides, and wildlife is working. Golden eagles are an important indicator species. They rely upon the rest of their ecosystem for food and for shelter, and if those things are not in place, eagles would not survive. Thus, the presence of golden eagles tells an important story about the habitats on



Image from a farm in West Virginia, showing an adult bald and a young golden eagle squabbling over a bait pile. Photo courtesy of Chuck Waggy, WVDNR.



Above, Jeff Cooper with DGIF and Dave Kramar, of VT, assess the plumage characteristics of an adult golden eagle that is about to be released with a cellular tracking transmitter. Inset, Michael Lanzone of Cellular Tracking Technologies and Trish Miller of WVU/PSU measure the footpad of an eagle. Footpad size can be used to determine the bird's sex. Inset photo courtesy of Trish Miller, WVU/PSU.



Sally Miller



A golden eagle photographed by a trail camera at a bait site in West Virginia.

which they depend. But the tale of eagles also reminds us that there are still threats in our woods—serious threats that can be addressed, but that require management if they are not to constrain the rebound of this remarkable bird.

The increase in golden eagle numbers tells a positive story about the management of Virginia's wild lands. As this bird is one of the few truly wild species in our woods, it is critical that we humans listen to what it has to say. The coming years are important for golden eagles and other wildlife that share the natural abundance of the Appalachian Mountains. Challenges in the environment may impact the trajectory of populations of this extraordinary bird. However, if we as a people can continue to be good stewards of their habitat and if we can effectively mitigate

the threats golden eagles face, our children and theirs will likely continue to regard this bird as we do today—as an exceptional symbol of true wilderness. ❧

Todd Katzner is a research assistant professor in the Division of Forestry and Natural Resources at West Virginia University. He has studied eagles for more than 15 years in North America and Central Asia. Jeff Cooper has coordinated nongame avian projects for DGIF for the past 11 years and worked with birds for over 20 years. His current research includes golden eagle wintering ecology.

RESOURCES

- <http://katznerlab.com>
- www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/birds/golden-eagle
- www.wildlifecenter.org

Savage Neck Dunes

The tallest point on Virginia's Eastern Shore, towering more than 50 feet above sea level, is a sandy ridge running for nearly a mile along the Chesapeake Bay near the town of Eastville. When it comes to geological features, the Eastern Shore tends to be understated: lots of woods and farm fields, wide salt marshes, shallow bays, and low-slung barrier islands. But stand here on this ridge, look down the cliff edge where the dune spills abruptly into a loblolly pine forest, and the landscape becomes anything but subtle.

These dunes, which geologists believe may be more than 10,000 years old, are one of the more emphatic features of Savage Neck Dunes Natural Area Preserve, which was established in



Custis Pond is a natural freshwater pond geologists believe was part of an ancient dune system.



Muscadine grape is an important food for birds and

Dunes

by Curtis J. Badger

the late 1990s by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). These rare ancient dunes, and the plants associated with them, are one of the reasons the state gave the site such a high priority for protection.

The other reason is a bit less dramatic and obvious. A trail crosses the dune ridge and emerges onto a sandy beach on the Chesapeake Bay. Here, burrowing in the sand, is a tiny beetle with a five dollar name. The northeastern beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela dorsalis dorsalis*) was once abundant along the northeast coast from Massachusetts to New Jersey as well as along the Chesapeake Bay. But this tiger beetle depends upon undisturbed beach habitat for its survival, and over the past two

centuries we have left very little of our northeastern beaches undisturbed. Consequently, only two populations of the beetle remain along the entire Atlantic coast, along with a more stable colony along the Chesapeake Bay. (See photo below.)

The tiger beetle has been placed on the federally threatened list, and Savage Neck Dunes has one of the largest populations along the bay. The tiger beetles spend most of their lives as larvae living in burrows four to eight inches deep between the high tide line and the primary dunes. When the weather warms in June the adult insects will emerge, spend the summer foraging for food that the high tide brings in, and then breed and die.

In late summer the eggs will hatch, larvae will again burrow into the sand, and the next generation will again await the coming summer.

The plight of the northeastern beach tiger beetle is emblematic of what happens when humans monkey around with natural systems. Beaches and similar coastal ecosystems are particularly vulnerable, both because of their fragility and their desirability. People want to live on the water, and we want easy and unlimited access to the beach. As our northeastern beaches lose their namesake bug, the importance of places like Savage Neck Dunes becomes all the more important.

Savage Neck Dunes has plant communities that once were common along the coast,



©Curtis Badger



Northeastern beach tiger beetle

©Tom Badger



The dunes at Savage Neck NAP stretch for a mile along Chesapeake Bay shoreline. ©Curtis Badger.

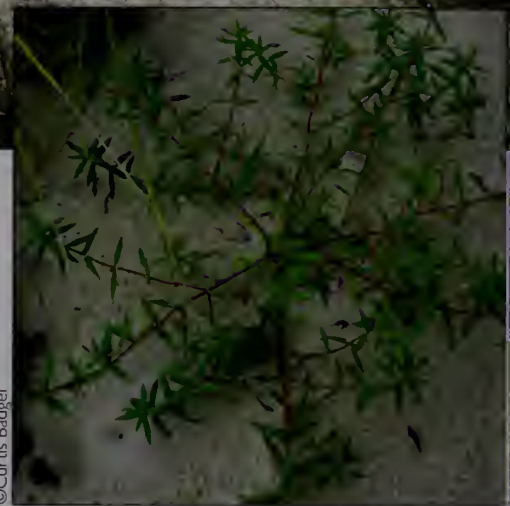
but in the past century or so, as natural dunes have been altered, they have become increasingly rare. A dune system can be a harsh environment, and not just any plant can survive there. The dunes are just a short distance from the Chesapeake Bay and are subject to salt-laden breezes, occasional storm tides, and sometimes strong onshore winds. An unusual group of plants has adapted well to these conditions and they make up a community of flora that are dependent upon each other for their survival. Some of the plants, such as salt-meadow hay (*Spartina patens*), are more commonly found in tidal wetlands. Others, such as beach bean (*Strophostyles helvola*) and Carolina thistle (*Salsola kali*), thrive in arid environments. Perhaps the reason Savage Neck Dunes has such a diverse plant community is because the dunes are both arid and subject to occasional infusions of salt water.

The plants of the dunes could be called the architectural superstructure that holds the dunes together. Below the surface of the sand, roots and rhizomes of American beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*) and panic grass (*Panicum amarum amarulum*) provide a framework for the sand to build around. And on the surface of the dunes, low growing spurges such as seaside sandmat (*Chamaesyce*

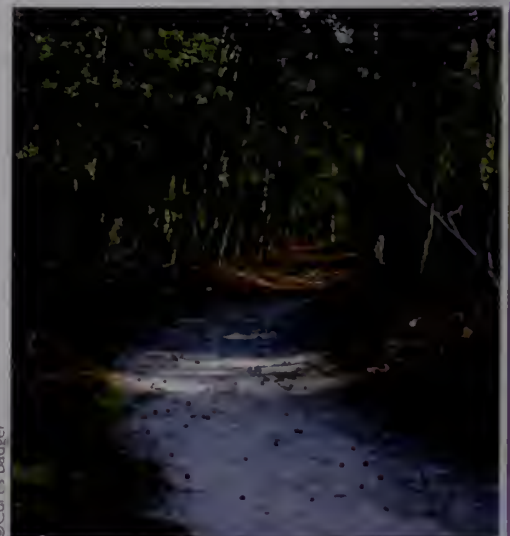
polygonigolia) trap sand carried by the breeze and hold it in place on the dune surface.

Here we have the ultimate symbiotic relationship. The dunes survive because the plants are there, and the plant community survives because of the dunes. Few natural dune grassland communities survive anymore, and once they are gone they are difficult to regain. Sometimes dunes are lost to residential or recreational development, and frequently they are lost because of our need to stop beach erosion. Beaches are made of sand and they move readily with tides and wind, and the fact that sea level is rising does not help. When communities invest millions of dollars in infrastructure, they want a sense of permanence that a migrating beach does not afford. That's usually when the bulldozers appear and the beach replenishment begins.

The dunes at Savage Neck have never felt the blade of a bulldozer. Instead, American beach grass and panic grass are sending roots and rhizomes into the core of the dune. Seaside sandmat and beach heather trap blowing sand particles. Sand builds up around sprouting saltmeadow hay. And farther upland grow wild black cherry, sweet gum, loblolly pine, and wax myrtle. All help anchor the dunes and protect the integrity of



Buttonweed (*Diodia teres*) is a fragile looking plant that has adapted well to the dunes.



A sandy trail leads through the maritime forest to the dunes.



Panicum, shown here, and American beach grass are two of the foundation plants of the dunes.

the system. These dunes have been here for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years. Not exactly in the same spot, perhaps, but here nonetheless.

Once a dune system loses this natural balance of sand and structure, it is likely gone for good. Many of Virginia's coastal beaches, including Assateague National Seashore, are manipulated by machines, which re-build parking areas after storms and push up temporary protective dune lines.

Savage Neck Dunes became the property of the state in the late 1990s when two adjoining farms were purchased to create a preserve of nearly 300 acres, with a mile of beach frontage. Access to the dunes and the beach is via a hiking trail that begins in a small parking lot on Savage Neck Road, about two miles west of Eastville. The trail runs alongside a farm field that is being converted to grassland and scrubland. It then enters a loblolly pine forest and passes Custis Pond, a natural freshwater pond that geologists believe was part of an old coastal dune system. Once the trail enters the woods, the footing gradually goes from hard-packed clay to loose sand as it nears the dunes. The pines become a bit stunted, and as the dunes become larger, some of the trees appear to have limbs unnaturally close to the ground.

In the dunes, the forest is an open canopy woodland consisting mainly of pines, sassafras, wild black cherry, and eastern red cedar. These secondary dunes are more than 50 feet tall, and in some places the dunes drop off steeply into the pine forest below. A smaller ridge of primary dunes separates the secondary dunes and the forest from the beach.

In less than a mile, the trail passes through grassland and scrub, pine forest, freshwater wetlands, maritime dunes, beach, and finally open bay. This diversity of habitat can provide some pretty spectacular wildlife watching. The forest is part of a wooded migratory corridor used by songbirds as they move up and down the coast, and the bay and Custis Pond are home to waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, and terns. So on a given day at Savage Neck Dunes you could see anything from a Northern gannet to a prothonotary warbler. In addition, Savage Neck supports a varied community of mammals. Fox tracks are routinely seen all along the sandy dunes, and in a sheltered valley between two large dunes fox dens are cut through the sand and into the subsoil. Raccoons are often seen foraging along the beach, and deer are plentiful in the forest and fields.

On a recent trip to Savage Neck, I met a

visitor from Virginia Beach who was leaving the preserve as I arrived. Assuming I was a first-time visitor, he gave me a lengthy description of the preserve and told me what a wonderful place it was. "What we have here," he exclaimed, "is a good example of the government doing something right." ✎

*Curtis Badger, whose most recent book is *A Natural History of Quiet Waters* (UVA Press), has written widely about natural history and wildlife art. He lives on Virginia's Eastern Shore.*



The sassafras tree produces berries in the fall on bright red stalks.



Triton
BOATS

Be Wild! Live Wild!
Grow Wild!

VOLUNTEER for Wildlife

by Cristina Santiestevan

Whether you're a hunter, a wildflower enthusiast, or a retired accountant, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) has a volunteer opportunity that's perfect for you. Through the Complementary Work Force Program (CWF), volunteers assist staff with essential tasks in the field, at community events, and behind desks or computers.

The Complementary Work Force Program is named appropriately. This team of volunteers works closely with DGIF staff wherever needed. In short, the volunteers complement the staff, effectively increasing the workforce of DGIF and allowing the Department to extend its reach to include activities that might otherwise be eliminated.

"Their contributions have such a tremendous impact," says Estella Randolph, DGIF volunteer administrator. According to Randolph, more than 300 volunteers donated 8,753 total hours to the Department through CWF in 2011. And 2012 looks to be even busier; nearly 250 CWF volunteers had already donated more than 5,300 hours by the end of February.

These donated hours are valuable. "Volunteer time for 2011 was valued at \$21.79 per hour," says Randolph. The value of \$21.79 is calculated by Independent Sector, a national nonprofit that provides support for other nonprofits, charitable groups, and other volunteer-supported organizations. "So, for 2011, volunteers donated time worth an estimated value of \$190,000," explains Randolph. By using the same hourly rate for this year, we can see that volunteers

CWF volunteers perform a range of services, including assistance at public events and providing another set of hands in the field.

had already donated time valued at \$116,000 by the end of February.

But, the value of this program extends far beyond dollars and budgets. According to Randolph, CWF volunteers are an essential part of extending DGIF's reach throughout the state. "For example," explains Randolph, "we get dozens of requests for DGIF to participate in community-based programs or shows, and sometimes we aren't



Lee Walker



Lee Walker



Lee Walker

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

No matter your interests or experience, the Complementary Work Force Program has volunteer opportunities that are bound to appeal. Registering is simple:

- Register online at www.dgif.virginia.gov/volunteer/
- Or, contact Estella Randolph, VDGI Volunteer Administrator, with your questions or to request an application:

Email: estella.randolph@dgif.virginia.gov

Phone: 804-367-4331

Once registered as a CWF volunteer, you can review volunteer opportunities at www.dgif.virginia.gov/volunteer/cwf/opportunities.

Regional Coordinators:

Eastern – Ray Philbates (804) 829-6580 Ray.Phibates@dgif.virginia.gov

Northcentral – Thomas Goldston (540) 899-4169 Thomas.Goldston@dgif.virginia.gov

Five Reasons to Volunteer with Us

1. This is not your typical volunteer opportunity. Unlike many volunteer programs, CWF allows participants to pick and choose how and when they will help. Volunteers register with their regional offices, and then receive updates when new volunteer opportunities become available. And, because those opportunities range from office support to field projects, there really is something for everyone.

2. Your time is valuable. According to Independent Sector—a national nonprofit that supports charitable organizations—volunteer time was valued at \$21.79 per hour in 2011. This means that Virginia's CWF volunteers donated more than \$190,000 worth of their time to DGIF in 2011. And, by the end of February 2012, CWF participants had already donated approximately \$116,000 in volunteer hours. If you're eager to give back, this is a great way to do so.

3. Virginia's wildlife needs you. Many CWF volunteers help with wildlife management activities. As a volunteer, you may help stock trout streams, assist with wildlife research projects, or contribute to habitat restoration projects at Powhatan Lakes or elsewhere.

4. Virginia's people need you. As a CWF volunteer, you may choose to answer questions about wildlife at community events, assist with the daily operations at shooting ranges, or inspect and maintain waterway markers to aid boaters navigating through Virginia's waters.

5. You'll have fun. When was the last time you stocked a trout stream, assisted a wildlife biologist, or answered a child's questions about nature? Never? Well, here's your chance.

able to respond to all of these requests. But, many times we are able to rely on our volunteer corps for these shows. This allows us to have a presence at many more community events than perhaps we would be able to do with just our staff."

Volunteers at educational events help with setting up and dismantling exhibits, answering questions, and leading educational presentations. While some events rely on both staff and volunteers, others are entirely volunteer-run. "This has been an area where the volunteer support has been just tremendous," says Randolph.

Beyond classrooms and community presentations, volunteers have countless opportunities to get their hands dirty in the field. Trout stocking, for example, is an ongoing—and popular—CWF opportunity. Volunteers assist staff by carrying and releasing buckets of hatchery-raised fish to confidential release sites, helping with road safety, and keeping records or making reports, as needed.

State biologists occasionally call upon CWF volunteers to assist with data collection in the field. For example, CWF volunteers are helping biologists monitor for chronic wasting disease by collecting samples from road-killed and hunter-harvested deer. Elsewhere, CWF volunteers conduct wildlife damage inspections and issue Official Kill Permits where appropriate, volunteer at their local shooting range, or conduct annual inspections of Virginia's regulatory markers within the state's inland waterways. And, volunteers who are handy with tools can assist with equipment repair and maintenance, grounds keeping, and occasional construction or demolition projects.

Volunteers who prefer a desk are also in luck; they may assist administrative staff at DGIF's regional offices by answering phones, greeting visitors, and helping with general office work.

"A lot of our volunteers have a background with natural resources," says Randolph. "But many of them do not. You don't have to be an outdoorsman to volunteer." There are some requirements for potential volunteers, however, including the submission of an application and a background check. Regular volunteers must be at least 18. Junior Volunteers—who must be supervised by an adult or guardian—may be 14 to 18 years old. Since adult supervision is required for younger volunteers, many participate as

groups through Boy Scout or Girl Scout troops, classrooms, or community groups.

College students have a new opportunity to volunteer this year through the Wildlife Internship Network, which is managed as part of the Complementary Work Force Program. Participating students must be currently enrolled in an accredited college or university in Virginia, and will have the opportunity to gain experience by working with professionals throughout DGIF, from fisheries management and wildlife biology to marketing and information technology. "The staff is very supportive of this, because many of them had the opportunity, when they were in college, to do internships," says Randolph. "Our staff are committed to making these opportunities available for students."

DGIF's Complementary Work Force Program is just a few years old, and doesn't yet span the entire state. "Right now, the Complementary Work Force Program is only active in Regions 1 and 4," explains Randolph. "We do not have an active CWF Program in Regions 2 and 3." Randolph explains that the Agency will need to hire regional coordinators in order to incorporate those regions. "We are optimistic that we will be able to expand the program statewide." Until then, residents in these regions are encouraged to consider other volunteer opportunities through DGIF.

"People come for so many different reasons," says Randolph. "It could be that they've received some past benefit from DGIF and they want to give back. It could be because they enjoy the outdoors, and they want to do their part to conserve it. Or, it could be that they just want some new challenge." Whatever the reason, the CWF regional coordinator works with each CWF volunteer to ensure they receive the opportunities that best fit their interests. "It is truly a volunteer opportunity where the volunteers are the final decision maker in whether they participate in a given activity." In other words, whether you'd prefer to operate a boat, chat with students, or assist in a regional office, the Complementary Work Force Program will help you find a volunteer opportunity that fits your schedule and your interests. ❧

Cristina Santiestevan writes about wildlife and the environment from her home in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains.



Top, surveys are often conducted under tight timelines, and volunteers help staff with data collection. Here, many CWF members have wildlife-related knowledge to share.

New Access Fee to Visit WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

The WMA system's primary mission is to maintain and enhance wildlife habitats that support game and non-game wildlife while providing opportunities to hunt, fish, trap, and view wildlife. Now, with the new fees in place, all users can contribute to maintaining and growing the WMA program.

The decision to levy access fees to the WMAs was not lightly made. Over 4,000 WMA visitors were queried on-site and many thousands more were surveyed on the Internet. The vast majority of responders favored the Access Fee because it is the equitable and fair thing to do.

Executive Director Bob Duncan encourages "folks who will now have to buy an Access Permit to consider purchasing a hunting or fishing license instead." He continues, "The operation and maintenance of this statewide system of WMAs would be further

enhanced because a hunting or fishing license brings federal matching dollars as well, where the Access Permit does not."

It makes sense, then, to get a hunting or fishing license that is cheaper than a WMA Annual Permit and brings in more operating funds. And a big plus, says Duncan, is that "DGIF has a number of outreach programs to get folks involved in hunting and fishing. Those citizens who don't now hunt or fish may find that they enjoy it once they have the opportunity to experience the pleasures of these time-honored traditions."

For more information, call 804-367-1000 or go to www.dgif.virginia.gov/access-permit.

King Montgomery is a freelance outdoors/travel writer and photographer from Burke and a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife. Contact him at kingangler1@aol.com.

essay by King Montgomery

My father used to say, "There's no such thing as a free lunch." I soon learned that even though something is "free," someone is paying for it. And that has been the case with the Department's 39 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and DGIF-owned fishing lakes until this year.

Only some of the many thousands of visitors to the WMAs and the lakes have paid their way; licensed hunters, anglers, trappers, and those who register boats are in this group. Since the inception of WMAs, these folks have provided a "free lunch" for all the other visitors—wildlife and bird watchers, wildlife photographers, hikers, and in some WMAs campers, horseback riders, and those who use sighting-in ranges.

Since January 1, 2012, visitors over 17 years of age to WMAs and state lakes who do not have a valid hunting, fishing, or trapping license, or current boat registration, must pay a Daily Access Fee of \$4 or an Annual Access Fee of \$23. Payment may be made either through the DGIF website, by calling 1-866-721-6911, or through Licensing Agents. This evens the playing field and all visitors now must "pay to play," which will help with WMA wildlife habitat management and improvement costs, maintenance costs, personnel costs, and the like.

Dwight Dyke



©King Montgomery

AFIELD AND AFLOAT



One With the Wilderness: Passions of a Solo Bowhunter, 2nd edition
Mike Mitten

2009 Herd Bull Productions &
James W. Smith Printing Company
Hardcover with color photographs
\$38.00
www.brothersofthebow.com
641-693-9100

"To be alone in nature is not to be lonely. The companionship of the elements surrounds us on every side, enveloping us in a living web of vitality and movement. Within that mantle we are enabled to find our own place, uninfluenced by the demands and bustle of everyday life. We are able to hear the wisdom that wells up from our unique perspective—wisdom that the elements alone can amplify loud enough for us to hear and understand."

—Caitlín Matthews

What a privilege it is to read such an action-packed and heartfelt account of one hunter's true-life adventure stories. From the beginning, Mike Mitten's life has been immersed in outdoor tradition. So organic is hunting to his way of life, that his biology degree from Northern Illinois University was partially financed by fur trapping and by hunting raccoon with his beloved hounds. Mitten reveals how self-reliance, reverence for nature, and sharply-honed woodsmanship skills have made it possible for him to spend multiple weeks alone in the wilderness with pack and bow (often at the mercy of the elements and unpredictable wildlife), getting up close and personal with the species he hunts: deer, feral hog, caribou, moose, bear, and elk, just to name a few.

The action is lively, and as Mitten recounts his bowhunting and fishing experiences in the Alaskan bush and in the wilderness areas of Wisconsin, Illinois, Colorado, Texas, and Canada, we wonder with each turn of the page, "What's going to happen next?!" I won't spoil it for you, but by the end of the book you'll understand:

- ◆ Why it's not a good thing to pitch your tent too close to your bear pole.
- ◆ Why a dead moose isn't always a dead moose.
- ◆ Why Ziploc bags can be your best friend.
- ◆ Why we must be confidently prepared for hunting success, but humble enough to appreciate how the web of life works when the hunt doesn't go our way.

Mitten tackles a few controversial topics such as predator, and trophy, hunting. Through his thoughtful narrative, and because Mitten is both scientist and outdoor philosopher, one can begin to understand the occasional, ethical, and area-specific 'selective' hunting of certain animals from a conservation perspective. This is a discussion not every hunter is either emotionally or intellectually equipped to carry off with any depth, but Mitten's perceptions add much to the debate.

Aside from some pretty gripping tales, there are poignant tributes to fellow hunters and friends who have passed on to other hunting grounds, and tips-of-the-cap to myriad outdoor mentors who've helped inspire his quests. He's honest about his triumphs as well as his mistakes, and he doesn't sugarcoat the real dangers involved in hunting isolated areas. Mitten extols the wonders present in pre-hunt scouting trips and days afield when the hunter goes empty-handed. During these moments, tree canopies become woodland cathedrals, and the appreciative hunter can still thrill to the sound of birdcall or bugling elk. This book will appeal to hunter and non-hunter alike, and will surely cause the avid bowhunter to nock arrows in his or her dreams.

I'll let Mitten speak for himself as he describes outdoor tradition coming full circle on family land he has tended and hunted for years:

"My father and I replanted the trees. Eventually the trees took hold, and out grew the grasses, growing over a foot per year. Five years later, I hid behind one of those trees as a group of deer fed from a clover field back into the stand of evergreens we planted. A big doe passed out of range, but her button buck trotted past as I drew and released. This first deer was so special to me... It was a special deer because the trees we planted provided secure cover for the deer, and also provided me with structure to hide behind. I was never more connected to the web of life than when I took my first deer. The romance of taking a deer while hiding behind a tree returned thirty-years later, telling my fifteen-year-old son the story of my first deer while we hung in a tree-stand in one of the trees I had planted. It mattered not that we didn't get any shots at deer that evening; we were in a sacred place on grandpa's land, held aloft by a sturdy tree trunk that once slipped through my fingers into a slit in the ground."

Outdoor Kids



While fishing a private pond in Spotsylvania County on the afternoon of February 4, 2012 with Dad (Jason Rawlings) and grandfather (Bobby Rawlings), Guy Robert Rawlings (three years old) lands a largemouth bass. Reeling the fish in was quite a chore but Guy caught this one all by himself, and much to his surprise it was a citation for length in Virginia.

At Kiptopeke, 50 Years of Banding Birds

by Curtis Badger

Kiptopeke State Park, a high bluff overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, was once the site of a ferry terminal. Before the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel opened in 1964, people would drive to Kiptopeke and catch the boat to Little Creek and points south. A few remnants of that era still remain. On a sandy hill just beyond the terminal area a rusting metal sign advertises "Tourinns Motor Court – Free TV." Tourinns provided food and lodging for ferry passengers, and it played a part in another chapter of Kiptopeke history that continues today.

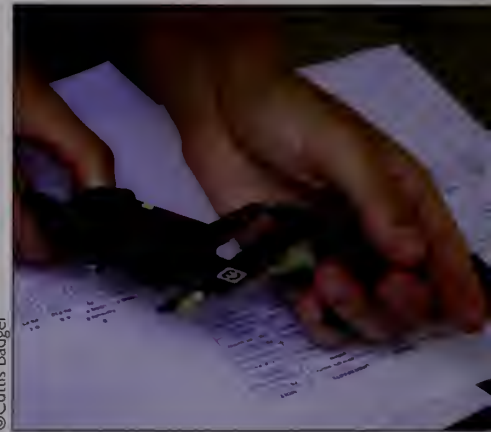
In the fall of 1963 a group of friends who shared an interest in birds stopped for lunch at the restaurant prior to boarding the ferry. While there, they noticed a great number of birds in the nearby woods and fields. They realized that the birds were gathering at the tip of the peninsula before making the 17-mile Chesapeake Bay crossing. And they had an idea. What if they were to set up a banding station and collect data that could be used to study the movement of songbirds along the coast?

And so they did. Thanks to their dedication, we'll soon have a half-century of uninterrupted data on the fall migration. The original banding station began as a modest

operation run by six volunteers: Fred Scott, Charlie Hacker, Mike and Dorothy Mitchell, and Walter and Doris Smith. Today the station is run by the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (www.cvwo.org), a non-profit organization dedicated to field research, education, and habitat conservation. CVWO operates the banding station from mid-August until late November, as well as a nearby hawk observatory, just across a grassy field from the old Tourinns sign. Each year, the station will band around 10,000 birds representing about 100 different species. When the birds are banded they are quickly identified, measured, and evaluated for age, sex, and fat stores. Information is entered into the Department of the Interior Bird Banding Laboratory database (www.doi.gov/data base).

As the Kiptopeke banding station celebrates its 50th year, it will continue a mission that has become increasingly important in recent years: educating the public about bird migration and the need to protect the habitat birds rely upon during their travels. Virginia's Eastern Shore acts as a natural funnel, narrowing at its southern tip, a place where birds gather in great numbers before crossing the mouth of the bay. While here, they must rest and build up fat reserves to fuel the remainder of their journey. So protection of natural habitat here is a vital step in providing food and cover.

Fortunately, over the past several years much habitat on the southern tip of the Eastern Shore has been protected by state, federal, and private conservation ownership. In addition to Kiptopeke State Park and the visionary land conservation efforts by the Coastal Program at the Department of Environmental Quality, there is the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge and Fisherman Island NWR, as well as Magothy Bay, Cape Charles, and Savage Neck Dunes (see feature in this issue) natural area preserves. The barrier islands along the coast are protected by The Nature Conservancy, providing a green corridor that runs from the ocean to the bay. It is a place where birds can gather, rest, and refuel as they head for points south, much as humans once did during the days when the ferries sailed.



©Curtis Badger

IMAGE OF THE MONTH



Congratulations go to Paul A. Block of Williamsburg for his awesome photograph of a robber fly taken in July of 2009. Paul shot this image using a Canon PowerShot SD600, no ISO recorded, 1/500th, f/5.6. The green background really makes the bug stand out, emphasizing the alien appearance of this impressive fly. I LOVE this shot!!! Way to go, Paul!

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with our readers.



Effective July 1, DGIF began selling the 2012 Virginia State Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp. The artwork for the stamp, painted by John Obolewicz, is entitled "Buffleheads at Cape Henry Light" and depicts a pair of buffleheads arching up with wings outspread over the water. Funds generated from all sales of the Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp are placed in the Department's Game Protection Fund and are accounted for separately, designated as the Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp Fund. Monies are used to contract with appropriate nonprofit organizations for cooperative waterfowl habitat improvement projects to: protect, preserve, restore, enhance and develop waterfowl habitat in Virginia through the Department's waterfowl program; and, offset the administrative costs associated with production, issuance of, and accounting for the stamp. The annual Migratory Waterfowl Conservation Stamp can be purchased for a fee of \$10 (resident or non-resident) at license agents or clerks who sell Virginia hunting licenses or from the Department's website.

Virginia Herpetological Society Events

August 18: 1-Day Survey Event, Caledon Natural Area State Park

More information at:

www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com/2012-events/2012-vhs-events/index.htm

**Buy Your Lifetime
Hunting or Fishing License**
1-866-721-6911



Black Bear Management

Bear populations have increased in Virginia and throughout the eastern U.S. during the past quarter-century. Harvest management, reforestation, public land purchases, oak forest maturation, bear restoration efforts, and natural range expansions have all contributed to bear population growth here. Although this growing population has been welcomed by many people, the abundance of bears can also create concerns for others.

Since 2001, Virginia's Black Bear Management Plan (BBMP) has provided the blueprint for black bear management to meet the Department's mission of managing *"wildlife...to maintain optimum populations...to serve the needs of the Commonwealth."*

For six weeks during June and July, we are asking for public input on the revised BBMP. This plan has been constructed over the past two years through guidance from public Stakeholder Advisory Committees and the DGIF Technical Committee. The goals in the revised BBMP reflect the values of a diverse public and are broad statements of principles and ideals about what should be accomplished with bear management in Virginia. This plan will guide black bear management across the commonwealth over the next ten years.

We encourage you to review and comment on the draft BBMP, which will be posted at www.dgif.virginia.gov/comment.

Congratulations, Writers!

Congratulations are in order to the recent winners of the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association's high school and collegiate writing competitions. Announcements and awards were made during the annual meeting of the association held in Warm Springs, Bath County, in late March.

In the high school contest, first place went to William Perkins of Lancaster High School for his essay about a sea camp he attended in the Florida Keys. Second place was awarded to Matthew Reilly of Fluvanna High School, whose story recounted fly fishing adventures with his dad in the Blue Ridge foothills. Sarah Smith of Lancaster High School took third place for her story honoring her grandfather and their last fishing trip together.

Awards to college undergraduates were as follows. Nikita Jathan of VCU won first place for her entry, "Big Dreams," about her work with elephants in Thailand. Nicholas Lenderking-Brill of the University of Virginia took second place for his tale about a trek along the Appalachian Trail—a "coming of age" story.

Winning essays may be viewed online, at www.vowa.org.

Kudos also are in order for VOWA members Marie Majarov and Beau Beasley, who recently took honors for their photography and writing skills during the annual conference of the Mason-Dixon Outdoor Writers Association.

Landowners Wanted

Quail Management Assistance Program

www.dgif.virginia.gov/quail/qmap.asp



2011 Ang



The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Hall of Fame list is a compilation of all the freshwater anglers who qualified for advanced awards in the Angler Recognition Program.

To achieve the status of Master Angler I, five trophy fish of different species must be caught and registered with the Virginia Angler Recognition Program. For Master II, 10 trophy fish of different species must be caught, and so on for the Master III, IV, or V level. Expert anglers must catch and register 10 trophy fish of the same species.

Each angler that accomplishes this feat receives a Master Angler or Expert Angler certificate and patch. Expert patches include the species on the patch. There is no fee or application for Master or Expert.

If you have records prior to 1995 and believe you may have obtained this angling status, please call the Virginia Angler Recognition Program at (804) 367-7800 to have your records checked.

The Creel-of-the-Year Award recognizes the angler who accounts for the most trophy-size fish caught and registered in the Angler Recognition Program from January 1 through December 31, annually.

MASTER LEVEL I

Roy L. Allen
G. E. Ballard, Jr.
Duane A. Barlow
Melanie A. Bayford
Dean Blankenship
Robert W. Breeden
Troy M. Brooks
David L. Brown
Andrew V. Brunk
Scott A. Buffington
Michael E. Carbaugh
Gary P. Carter
Russell L. Conner, III
Tommy E. Conner
Kyle V. Cox
Ramon B. Deisher, Sr.
Hershel R. Dotson
Mark C. Eavers
Timothy C. Fields
William E. Filomarinio
Shaun M. Fleming
Mark W. Fletcher
Charles F. Fochtman
Lewis W. Graves, Sr.
Roger Lee Haynes
Ronald Hill, II
Tom Hipple
Donald R. Holtz

Kenneth D. Howell
Christopher Huffman
Jimmy R. Hunziker
Corey W. Janecky
David W. Jenkins
James C. Jenkins
Robert B. Kump, Sr.
Larry A. Long
Thomas L. Mantlo
Charles G. McDaniel
Steven P. Mitchell
Willard K. Moger
Emmette Mohler
Richard D. Moody
Steward N. Moore, Sr.
Joe Niamtu
Michael J. Padgett
Darryl W. Peery
Sean Perdue
Jack D. Rakes, Jr.
Ronald W. Reinhard
David W. Reynolds
M. Todd Sadler
Donald I. Satterfield
Herbert T. Shepherd
Darlene M. Simmons
Logan Smith
Thomas C. Spencer, Jr.
Andrew P. Spencley

Matthew E. Stone
David F. Turner
Allen R. Vandergrift
Ben D. Williams
Glaten C. Wood
Jonathan P. Woods
Chad R. Woodson

MASTER LEVEL II

Homer S. Brewer
Jeffery Downey
Zane Huffines
David Marsico
Matthew C. Miller
Thomas W. Pearce, Jr.
James D. Pearman, Jr.
Jerry Dean Reynolds
Otis B. Rose, IV
Anthony M. Smith
Larry D. Wells

MASTER LEVEL III

William L. Nicar

EXPERTS

Largemouth Bass
Punk Baker
Carl K. Bex

Mitchell C. Bundick
Gregory W. Hedrick
Jarod S. Mann
Joe Niamtu
Joel T. Parcell, Sr.
Michael P. Schneider
Eric C. Schrock
Robert C. Scott, Jr.
Robert S. Scruggs

Smallmouth Bass

R. Collins
Jeffrey W. Cox
Jimmie W. Edwards
Joshua T. Elliott
Richard E. Franklin, Jr.
Martin V. Hanbury
Stephen J. Miklandric
Leon M. O'Leary
Edgar R. Pettry, II

Crappie

Richard B. Abrahamian
Gregory M. Clark
Richard W. Clegg
Zachary S. Crum
Richard C. Insley
Michael W. Jones
Willard K. Moger

Gray A. Moss
John A. Nicholson

Sunfish

Kenneth C. Behnken
Jerry B. Gallagher
Gary Harmon
Kenneth D. Howell
Benjamin A. Lane
Tony L. Mitchell
William L. Nicar
Milan S. Osborne, Jr.
Robert G. Wagner

Channel Catfish

John A. Cabbage
Robert L. Jimerson, Jr.
Michael W. Jones
Keith R. Keeter
John W. Woods

Blue Catfish

Thomas A. Biller
Vernon L. Bryant, Sr.

Flathead Catfish

Robert L. Jimerson, III
Anthony S. Martin, Jr.
William J. Puccio

er Hall of Fame

Rainbow Trout

Norman E. Cox, Jr.
Elijah C. Edwards
Robert H. Elam, Jr.
James W. Ferguson, Sr.
Robert W. Henegar, Sr.
Thomas R. Panko, Jr.

Kenneth T. Swain

Randall T. Tilley

Brown Trout

Darlene M. Simmons

Walleye

Caren N. Hundley

Yellow Perch

Mark W. Fletcher
Stephen H. Helvin
Claude W. Hudson
Richard C. Insley
Walter K. Obst
Daniel Salvitti

Kevin D. Stewart

Guy W. Woods

Gar

Dale L. Sturdifen

Creel Award

Derek Mayhew (38)
Largemouth Bass (2),
Crappie (1), Blue Catfish
(30), Flathead Catfish (4),
Walleye (1)

2011 ANGLERS OF THE YEAR

| SPECIES/SIZE | ANGLER'S NAME/HOME | BODY OF WATER | DATE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Largemouth Bass, 12 lbs., 25½ in. | Benjamin W. Wright, Palmyra | Private Pond | 04/19/2011 |
| Smallmouth Bass, 7 lbs. 10 oz., 21¼ in. | Randy Lobono, Jr., Barrington Hills, IL | Smith Mountain Lake | 03/25/2011 |
| Crappie, 4 lbs., 18¼ in. | Rice Brooks, Waynesboro | Albemarle Lake | 08/07/2011 |
| Rock Bass, 1 lb. 13 oz., 13½ in. | Anthony Smith, Gretna | Leesville Lake | 10/29/2011 |
| Sunfish, 3 lbs. 1 oz., 14 in. | Anthony Smith, Gretna | Private Pond | 11/02/2011 |
| White Bass, 2 lbs. 10 oz., 18½ in. | Amy Jennings, Brookneal | Buggs Island Lake | 11/06/2011 |
| Hybrid Striped Bass, 11 lbs. 8 oz., 28½ in. | Dalton O'Quinn, Haysi | Flannagan Reservoir | 07/03/2011 |
| Freshwater Drum, 24 lbs. 4 oz., 37¼ in. | Paul Denison, III, Stem, NC | Buggs Island Lake | 11/25/2011 |
| Striped Bass, 33 lbs., 44 in. | Lawrence L. Michael, Boyds, MD | Leesville Lake | 06/09/2011 |
| White Perch, 2 lb., 2 oz. 2 lb., 2 oz. | Brett E. Old, Chesapeake Howard Didier, III, Chesapeake | Private Pond Lake Meade | 02/19/2011 09/26/2011 |
| Channel Catfish, 25 lbs. 8 oz. | Robert L. Jimerson, Jr., Glen Allen | James River | 11/03/2011 |
| Blue Catfish, 143 lbs., 57 in. | Richard Anderson, Greenville, NC | Buggs Island Lake | 06/18/2011 |
| Flathead Catfish, 52 lbs. | Samuel Roach, Roxboro, NC | Dan River | 07/22/2011 |
| Rainbow Trout, 14 lbs. 6 oz. | Mark Eavers, Greenville | Private Pond | 10/05/2011 |
| Brook Trout, 4 lbs. 13 oz., 20½ in. 4 lbs. 13 oz., 20 in. | Cecil D. Miller, Grottos Will Helmick, Staunton | Hearthstone Lake Private Pond | 03/05/2011 10/21/2011 |
| Brown Trout, 14 lbs. 2 oz. | Mark Eavers, Greenville | Private Pond | 11/21/2011 |
| Chain Pickerel, 4 lbs. 12 oz., 26 in. | Elmer T. Merryman, Jr., Fredericksburg | Hunting Run Reservoir | 06/12/2011 |
| Muskellunge, 37 lbs., 52 in. | William P. Haines, Christiansburg | New River | 05/18/2011 |
| Northern Pike, 6 lbs. 10 oz., 32 in. | Guy W. Woods, Broadway | Lake Laura | 05/15/2011 |
| Walleye, 10 lbs., 10 oz., 28¼ in. | David W. Oaks, Jonesville | Powell River | 05/18/2011 |
| Yellow Perch, 2 lbs., 4 oz., 15 in. | Cameron Thomas, III, Charlottesville | Ragged Mountain Res. | 07/10/2011 |
| Gar, 26 lbs. 8 oz., 54 in. | Arron Bowen, Alton | Buggs Island Lake | 09/07/2011 |
| Bowfin, 15 lbs., 30¼ in. | Trace E. Austin, Chesapeake | Northwest River | 04/23/2011 |
| Carp, 46 lbs., 47½ in. | Jacob A. McGrady, Spotsylvania | Private Pond | 06/21/2011 |

PLEASE NOTE: You can find all you need to know about the Trophy Fish Program at www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/trophy/ or call 804-367-7800.



PHOTO TIPS

by Lynda Richardson

There is Something Phoney About Cameras These Days

I am finally giving in to some of the high-fuluting technology that is infiltrating... no, taking over our daily lives. A few months ago, I retired my beat up old flip phone and purchased a fancy new, latest and greatest iPhone 4S.

"Oh, you're going to LOVE it!" said husband Mike.

"You really NEED this phone. It will make your life so much easier," a friend agreed.

Don't they know they're talking to the number one anti-video game, gadget person on the planet?

So I get the iPhone. Yes, it is slim. It's nice to have e-mail and the Internet close at hand. Yes, I did get one mindless video game. (Angry Birds Rio. Some of those levels are IMPOSSIBLE!) But it was the 8-megapixel camera and bright f2.4 lens that really intrigued me. How good could it really be? And what about all of those intriguing photography apps?

Do you have any clue how many photography apps are available? I stopped counting at 100 and spent no less than an hour reviewing some of them. There are apps for creating 360-degree panoramic stitching, editing and managing images, changing someone's hair color (yes, that is what I said!), creating frames around your photos, High Dynamic Range (HDR), and switching people and/or animal's faces around, as well as numerous filters for creating vintage and many other photographic process looks, fisheye lens effects, collage makers, and many, many more! You can even apply more than one app to a single image.

I can't believe this wealth of craziness!



Yes, I chased Miss Katie around the house while looking for a great location to try out the Toon Camera app. I did slip her a few treats for her trouble and I think I got a cool picture out of the deal. What do you think?

©Lynda Richardson

Part of me insisted that I could download all of my iPhone images into Photoshop and work them that way, but another part of me delighted in how much fun it would be to try the different apps and be able to do so right on my phone! Some apps are free but others cost \$0.99 and higher, which can add up if you don't restrain

yourself. (I have only downloaded three... so far.)

One app I particularly enjoy is *Toon Camera*. Once turned on, anywhere you point the camera looks solarized and cartoon-like and you view the effect in real-time, which makes it even cooler. Right after I first downloaded this app I ran around the house chasing my dogs, trying to take pictures of them. They hated it, but I really love the effect it brings to an image!

Yes, I know. Nothing can beat photographs taken with our heavy, high-end digital SLR cameras... yet. But there is something really amazing about being able to use a small, thin phone to capture pretty darn good images. And it's even more amazing that you can "process" them right in that device with a zillion creative and exciting apps to choose from.

So if you're adventurous and want to try something fun, check out photography apps that you can download for your phone. Your next camera might be a bit phoney—ya never know.

Get to know your phone camera!

- ❖ Play with composition and lighting.
- ❖ Don't limit yourself to one shot.
- ❖ Shoot a lot.
- ❖ Experiment!
- ❖ Don't be afraid to shoot ordinary subjects like shoes, rocks, and trees.
- ❖ Watch out for the digital zoom.
- ❖ Watch your backgrounds.
- ❖ Get closer!
- ❖ Keep the lens clean.

Dude, You're Fixing to Run Aground

In all of my time running boats I have come very close to running aground but, fortunately, that has not happened—unless I was planning on it. What I mean is, if I want to nose my boat onto a beach or island that is one thing, but to actually be operating a boat at speed and make contact with the bottom... it's never a good thing!

During my previous career in the U.S. Coast Guard I learned a lot of wise things that kept me out of trouble. One really helpful phrase I learned was, "Crab pots don't float and birds don't walk on water." When the sun is glaring off of the surface, it appears that you could run your boat forever and be okay. Not so fast! If you see crab pots that appear to be floating, it actually means they are on the bottom and the bottom is only a few inches or maybe a foot deep! If you see birds walking on water, it means that the bottom is even closer to the surface, and this is a place you never want to run your boat or you will soon experience the unwelcomed scenario of being "high and dry"—or hard aground.

What should you do if you do run aground? First make sure that everyone is okay and that there are no injuries, and have everyone put on a life jacket. It never fails that someone will get the idea to step off of the boat and push, and they could find themselves in deep water quickly if the boat is near the edge of a drop-off. Then, see if you are taking on any water from damage to the hull of your boat. If you are, don't panic—because you are on the bottom! Also, if you are taking on water it is wise to leave your boat aground and radio or call for assistance. If you have a VHF-FM radio, contact the U.S. Coast Guard on channel 16. If you are using a cellular phone dial 911, but be sure to tell the operator where you are because the call may bounce to a 911 center in a different county or distant location.

Next, drop anchor if you are in coastal waters so that if you are near a tidal change you will not drift until you are ready to maneuver (if your boat is not damaged). Use a boat hook or paddle and take soundings or depths around your boat to help determine where good or deeper water is.

If you do decide to push, be very careful. Many people over-exert themselves and go into cardiac arrest or injure themselves while trying to free their boat. If you free yourself, be sure to inspect your boat thoroughly to be certain you are not taking on water from damage to the hull before returning to normal operations. It is also wise to return to your trailer or boat dock and pull your boat out to visually inspect the hull before continuing on, especially if you hit bottom hard or the bottom was rocky or something other than sand or mud.

All of these steps will help you safely get out of a difficult situation—without making it worse. Until next time: Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Have Fun!

Tom Guess, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret), serves as the state boating law administrator at the DGLF.

Courtesy of Ohio DNR, Div of Watercraft



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Dining In

by Ken and Maria Perrotte

Bass with Angel Hair Pasta and Citrus Cream Sauce

Back in the dark days before people could win hundreds of thousands of dollars in tournaments catching a live well full of *Micropterus salmoides*, the common practice was to toss them into an ice chest for filleting or cleaning.

Gramp baited-up night crawlers to fish for everything. Not differentiating between largemouth or smallmouth bass, he'd simply refer to them by the more generic name, "black bass," and add the fish to the stringer.

We don't eat bass much anymore—partly for fear of those who'd want us hung by our thumbs and similarly filleted for killing these hard-fighting, piscatorial predators. But bass taste good, especially younger ones taken from cool, clean waters.

This dish is pan-sautéed fillet of largemouth bass served over angel hair pasta and dressed with a citrus cream sauce that also features sun-dried tomatoes and just enough pepper to balance out.

Don't sacrifice a bass if it's against your principles. Most fish that fillet well, except for more uniquely-flavored ones such as tuna, would work. This includes dolphin (mahi), rockfish, snapper, grouper, and flounder on the saltwater side and crappie or bluegill in fresh water.

Angel hair pasta adds a nice, delicate foundation, but properly cooked spaghetti or linguine would also suffice in a pinch.

Cooking involves experimentation. That's how this versatile sauce came together. Experiment further by adding or omitting herbs and spices and try it atop vegetables or other meats. Consider parsley, dill, and lemon juice for topping asparagus or broccoli, or rosemary and basil for chicken. Grated parmesan may go well with shrimp or cauliflower. If you don't mind gilding the lily, add a little crab meat. Have fun!



Ingredients

- 5 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped scallions
- 3 thinly sliced shallots
- 1 clove minced garlic
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 8 ounces bottled clam juice
- ½ cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 tablespoons diced sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon herbs de Provence (or ½ teaspoon each basil and thyme)
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- ½ teaspoon lime zest
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 8 ounces angel hair pasta (fresh is always better)
- 8 small bass fillets (about 24 ounces of fish)
- All-purpose flour
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Cayenne pepper
- Orange zest and chives for garnish

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add scallions, shallots, and garlic and cook for a minute until vegetables begin to soften. Pour in wine, clam juice, orange and lime juices. Stir in tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce, herbs, and zest. Add the cream and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, until sauce is reduced by half.

Cook and drain the pasta according to package directions for al dente.

Lightly season the fish fillets with a little salt and pepper. Cayenne pepper adds an extra kick, but don't overpower with it. Dredge in flour and shake to remove the excess.

Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the fish, browning on both sides. Depending on thickness, the fillets will take 2 to 5 minutes on each side to cook through.

Toss the pasta with half the sauce. Add the fish and top with the remaining sauce. Garnish with orange zest and chives.

Pairing

Despite the citrus flavors, the cream and savory nuances help this dish pair well with a Chardonnay or Chablis, although a Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio may also work.



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Notice About Annual Photography Contest

With this issue, *Virginia Wildlife* becomes a bi-monthly magazine. We've added more content and special features, as we move to six issues a year. This change means that, even in the face of increased production costs, *Virginia Wildlife* will maintain its low annual subscription rate and remain free of advertising while giving you more of the coverage that you have asked for.

As part of the new production schedule, we will publish the annual photography contest in the July-August 2013 issue. The format will change somewhat and categories and prizes will be streamlined. Other contest details are being ironed out now; complete information about the new contest will be posted by July 1, at:

www.dgif.virginia.gov/virginia-wildlife

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